

Breakthrough

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Summary: After a trip to a gallery Neal gets some news about the owner from his mother and with this person's help he has an artistic breakthrough.

Breakthrough

_(I don't own HAIR or White Collar but I appreciate the ability to play with them as I so wish for this purpose I don't own any items mentioned unless it's the soundtrack to HAIR, the horrible movie it got made into, and the White Collar 1**__**st**__** seasonâ€|Otherwise I'm really unlucky**__**I hope you enjoy it and remember reviews are my LSD laced potâ€|*someone will get the reference, I hope*.)**_

Elizabeth Burke was standing in a large crowded art gallery, amazed that she was able to pull off an event in just 2 weeks. The owners had called her stating they wanted something done and quickly. She didn't think it was possible, but feeding off the almost manic vibe Berger offered, they got it done.

"Elizabeth you did a great job."

"Thanks, Claude. I'll be honest when you said 2 weeks I thought you guys were crazy."

"Thought? I flat out told Berger he was crazy when he suggested it."

"That must have been an interesting conversation."

"No I tell him that every day, it's lost it's effect over the years. In fact I think it lost the effect that first week." Said Claude with a smile.

"How long ago was that?" Asked Elizabeth.

"Uh, 1966."

"Wow. You know he kind of reminds me of my friend Neal."

"Yeah?"

"The charm, the energy."

"Tell him to come down here tonight."

"Can't he's working with Peter." Said Elizabeth not wanting to explain that the gallery was outside Neal's 2 mile radius.

"Claudio! The guy over there wants to buy one of Crissy's paintings but I can't find the paperwork on it."

"I got it, here keep El company."

"So you couldn't find the paperwork in your own gallery?"

"What? He's better at the business end of it."

"So Claude said you guys have known each other since '66?"

"Yup. It's a miracle we made it out of that time in one piece, especially Claude."

"What do you mean?"

"Claude got drafted, went to Vietnam, luckily we got him back. I mean it wasn't easy for him when he got home, but we got back together and have been that way ever since. How long have you been married?"

"Almost 11 years."

"He's a cop right?"

"FBI." Said Elizabeth nodding.

"I have an FBI file." Said Berger nostalgically.

"Yeah, what for?"

"Crazy stuff from the 60s, I protested outside the induction center one too many times. Claude's got one too from back then."

"And they took him into the military?"

"Back then they took anybody. They would have taken me if I hadn't shown up tripping on LSD to my medical exam, and then we told them Jeanie's daughter was mine. She isn't but they didn't do DNA back then." Said Berger with a laugh.

"Was it worth it?"

"Absolutely. I only wish we had thought of saying Rain was Claude's when he got drafted but things happen for a reason I guess."

"So Crissy's painting sold for \$300." Said Claude coming back over to them.

"She'll be happy. I thought they were all coming tonight."

"They are. They're just waiting for Rain to get home from work."

"That girl works too hard."

"One of her cases took her a little longer to clear."

"Guys, if you'll excuse me someone I know just walked in." Said Elizabeth.

"No problem." Said Berger.

"Neal! What are you doing here?"

"Peter told me there was an exhibit going on and gave me permission to come down since you were working it."

"Well have fun and be good." She said with a smile.

"I'm always good."

"Uh-huh, Is that why you have an electronic bracelet attached to your ankle?" She said laughing and walking away from him.

"Everything okay?" Asked Claude when El came back over.

"Oh yeah, he works with Peter. But more than that he's an amazing artist."

"Yeah? Would he be willing to display his stuff?" Asked Berger.

"I don't know I'll mention it to him later." Said Elizabeth.

"Finally you guys made it! What you so long?" Asked Claude as Woof, Jeanie, Crissy, and Jeanie's daughter Rain came in.

"My fault, had a case that wouldn't end." Said Rain. "And then this guy kept asking how I got the name Rain, so after I told him I was born in '68 was probably old enough to be his mother he told me randomly that one of his middle names was Stream, I had to get out."

"Where was this meeting?" Asked Berger curious as to where something like this would come up.

"The FBI building of all places." Answered Rain.

"Rain, this is Elizabeth Burke she helped put everything together." Said Claude.

"It's nice to meet you." Said Rain. "Any relation to Peter Burke?"

"He's my husband."

"Small world, his consultant is a little off though."

"Wow, Rain Ryan. Twice in one day."

"Neal Caffrey why am I not surprised?"

"You guys know each other?" Asked Berger with a small smile.

"Yes, this is the guy who made me late tonight."

"No, I believe that was your client." Said Neal, Elizabeth made a mental note of his middle name for later use.

"So Neal, I was telling Claude and Berger what an amazing artist you were." Said Elizabeth.

"Thank you El, but really I'm not that great."

"Really?" Responded Elizabeth smiling at his false modesty.

"So what do you like to work with the most?" Asked Woof who preferred photography.

"I mostly do reproductions, I have a bit of a block when it comes to my own stuff. I've been trying with pastels lately."

"Really, Peter didn't tell me that." Said Elizabeth.

"I do it mostly at night when I can't sleep." Neal said. Rain knew the basics of Neal's life, mostly cause she liked to know who she was working with, but didn't know the whole story. Elizabeth knew it was nightmares about Kate that still kept her friend awake and made another note to talk to Peter about it.

"So Neal, how old are you?" Asked Claude, Rain rolled her eyes at her Uncle's veiled attempt to prove her wrong.

"I'm 34."

"He's not young enough to be your son, mine maybe, but not your's." Said Berger with a smile.

"Just how young did you think I was?" Asked Neal. El smiled into her glass at this cause Neal didn't reveal much very often as it was Peter was still pulling information out of him about his past.

"In your 20s." Said Rain.

"It's the baby face." Said Elizabeth sticking her tongue out at him.

The night carried on with more sales for the Tribe and gentle teasing. Claude looked over after ringing the latest sale and saw Elizabeth cleaning up.

"Elizabeth, we got this go home to your husband, share that piece of information about Neal with him."

"Are you sure?"

"Go, I'll come by with your check tomorrow."

"Alright, Neal you ready?"

"Yeah, need help?"

"Sure, grab that?" She said pointing to a box.

"Yup. Have a good night Guys."

"You too, Neal. Call me if you decide you want to showcase." Said Berger who didn't know Claude was behind him shaking his head and pointing to himself.

"You got it." Said Neal with a small smile.

In the car Elizabeth decided to try and get more information from Neal as he leaned his head against the headrest. He looked tired and worn out.

"You okay Honey?"

"Huh? Oh yeah I'm fine its just a lot of the art reminded me of the stuff my mother used to paint."

"Really? I didn't know your mother was an artist."

"Yeah, she's actually an art teacher at a high school."

"How come you never talk about her?" She asked deciding Neal would stay with her and Peter and her that night, she was hoping he would be in a talkative mood.

"Trying to keep her safe. She wasn't happy when she found out what I was doing with my skills, but she understood. She wanted to come for my trial but I told her to stay away."

"Why?"

"Protection, besides I had Mozzie and Peter there."

"Yes, but Honey Peter was testifying against you. Kate wasn't there?"

"She stayed in the back with Mozzie. Mozzie didn't have his law degree yet." Said Neal with a smile.

"So it was just you and your mom growing up?"

"Yeah my father died when I was 2. Do you mind if I make a phone call?"

"No go ahead."

Neal pulled out his phone and dialed a phone number so quick even if El hadn't been driving she wouldn't have been able to see the numbers.

"Hello?"

"Hi Mom."

"Hi Honey, everything okay?"

"Yeah it's good, I just saw some paintings and it reminded me of the stuff that you used to do."

"Really where?" Asked Neal's mom.

"At this gallery Elizabeth was working so I went down there and met the guys that own it."

"Well I'll have to go see it next time I'm in town. What's it called?"

"Uh Tribe. When are you coming in next?"

"Uh next month probably, you said you met the guys that own it?"

"Yeah, El's clients why?"

"Was one of them named Berger, it's a total long shot never mind."

"Yeah. You know him?"

"Yeah, I do."

"I'm scared to ask, how?" Neal knew his mother's history and that she had a very active social life before he was born so he knew when to ask questions and when to cringe at the answers.

"We met at a few protests in the 60s and then at a couple functions since then. He and Claude still together?"

"Uh yeah, so how well do you know him?"

"Pretty well."

"How well Mom?"

"He's your father, Neal."

"What? My father died when I was 2 Mom."

"Mike Caffrey adopted you. He was your step father."

"Mom, why didn't you tell me this oh I don't know 30 years ago?"

"Because I didn't want you to think Berger didn't love you or confuse you more. Berger doesn't know."

"I have to go Mom."

"Neal I'll be there next week."

"Bye Mom."

El kept driving towards her house scared for Neal. He'd had so much upheaval in his life in the short time she knew him, usually she could read him, but right now he was blank.

"Honey, everything okay?"

"My father isn't my father."

"What? What are you talking about?"

"Mike Caffrey isn't my biological father." He said quietly as Elizabeth pulled up to her house.

"Come on explain inside, Peter will want to hear this."

Elizabeth and Neal walked in and when Peter noticed that Neal was with her he turned off the game he was watching.

"What happened?" He asked concerned.

"Everything's fine, a lot of paintings brought up some feelings for him; I didn't feel right about leaving him alone."

"Hang on let me get my badge and cuffs." Said Peter jokingly.

"Not those kind of memories." Said Neal with a smile.

"Still just in case." Said Peter with a smile in return. "So what happened?" As he put his badge and cuffs on the coffee table as Neal settled on the couch scratching Satchmo's ears.

"After we left the gallery I called my mom."

"I wasn't aware you guys were in touch."

"I talk to her a couple times a month always on a burner phone."

"That's why I didn't know."

"Anyways I called her to tell her about the show and she told me that the man I've thought was my father for the last 30 years isn't."

"What? Neal this is big, this just goes to prove everything I've been telling you for the past couple weeks."

"She told me who was though." Said Neal quietly nodding at Peter's statement.

"Well? Don't keep me waiting any longer. I've been waiting for 7 years to learn about your childhood." Said Peter.

"Berger."

"As inâ€|? Your client?"

"Yup."

"Wow, does he know?" Asked Peter shocked.

"My mom says no. I have no reason to doubt that she kept it from me."

"How'd they meet, I mean from what I gathered Berger hasn't really left New York. Are you from New York?"

"San Francisco. My mom said they met at a few protests."

"El, you said Claude and Berger have been together since the 60s. If so how is that possible?"

"I don't know, but we'll have the opportunity to ask when my mom gets here."

"Your mom is coming to visit?" Asked Peter.

"Yup, do you think you could go with me to the airport?"

"You bet. So how did your mom and Berger meet?" Asked Elizabeth.

"She said at a couple protests in the 60s and then later when they conceived me I guess. Do you think I should tell him?"

"Tell who what?" Asked Peter.

"Berger. That he's my father?"

"El, what do you think?"

"I think he deserves to know. The guys will surprise you they are very laid back about most things." Just then Neal's phone rang.

"Hello?"

"Hi Honey, so I got a flight out earlier than I thought I would. I'll be getting in at noon tomorrow, your time." Said Donna.

"That's really soon, Mom."

"Well the sooner we get this handled the better, as it is we've already let it go too long. You should get to know your father."

"Okay so you're coming in at noon, what airline and airport?"

"JFK. MegaAir."

"I'll see you then."

"Get some sleep Honey; we have a long day ahead of us." Said Donna.

"Yeah somehow I think this will be easier on you than me." Said Neal.

"I did what I thought was right at the time Neal."

"Yeah, I stand with my previous statement Mom. Good night."

Elizabeth set Neal up in the guestroom, while she and Peter went to bed themselves. Both thinking on the 34 year-old man in the next room who suddenly seemed much younger than his chronological age.

"Shoot I need to call the Marshalls." Said Peter.

"Why?"

"To tell them not to send out an alert when Neal's anklet doesn't register at June's tonight." He quickly dialed his contact at the Marshall Service. "Yeah Kay, its Peter Burke. I know. I cleared it with Pierce earlier he was with my wife the whole time, listen something personal for him came up and he's sleeping here tonight and he has to go to the airport tomorrow. He's getting his mother off a plane. No I'll be with him for everything. Thanks Kay."

"What did she say?"

"Before or after she questioned if it really was his mother coming in."

"Are you serious? I mean I know Neal's past doesn't scream 'TRUTH' but his mom coming in raises a question like that?"

"I know, but all Kay heard was 'Neal' and 'airport' it just brings up everything with Kate."

"What's going to happen if he wants to see Berger? He and Claude live above the gallery."

"I don't know, I'll have to talk to Reese about that."

The next morning Peter and Neal had already arrived at the office and were busy going over case files to see what the next one would be, but they were also watching the clock tick slowly towards 11. The time they would have to leave to go and get Donna. When Hughes knocked on the door he startled both Peter and Neal.

"Come in."

"Peter can I talk to you?"

"Sure. What's going on?" Asked Peter as they stepped on to the platform that overlooked the bullpen.

"What's wrong with Caffrey and don't say nothing quite a few people have noticed."

"He found out some interesting information last night, and he's nervous because his mother is coming in this afternoon."

"What news?" Asked Hughes hoping it didn't have anything to do with Kate.

"The man he thought was his biological father isn't, and he

unexpectedly found his real father last night at the gallery that El was catering."

"So what's up with his mother? I wasn't aware they were in contact."

"Yeah, she's coming in from San Francisco today to straighten it all out."

"What time is she coming in?"

"Her flight comes in at noon; I'm going to with him to get her. I already cleared it with the Marshall Service."

"Okay, he's off duty until he gets this straightened out."

"I'll tell him, um there is something else. Neal's father owns the gallery El catered last night; it's about a half mile out of his radius."

"Peterâ€|"

"Look Reese, this guy is Neal's only family connection in the city, from what El told me he's on the right track, and he and Neal seem to have hit it off."

"What do you know about him?"

"He and his partner are in their early 60s. They were involved in the antiwar movement."

"They were hippies." Said Reese simply.

"From what El said they still are. They've been together since '66."

"Okay, do they have records?"

"Yeah, for protests and Claude that's Berger's partner is a Vietnam vet."

"Really? That's it just arrests for protesting?"

"Yeah, oh and that lawyer that was here yesterday, Rainn Ryan?"

"What about her?"

"She's their niece."

"Really?"

"Yup."

"Alright, I'll talk to the Marshalls. Maybe I can work it out as long as he's with either his father or his father's partner they'll allow it, but I swear it Peter one screw up and I'll slap the cuffs on him myself."

"You talk to the Marshalls, I'll handle Neal. So can we head out

now?"

"Yeah go I'll call you when I find out if we can make this work. But Peter?"

"I got it. Thanks Reese."

"Yeah, yeah." Said Hughes picking up his phone to call Neal's handler in the Marshall's office.

Walking back to his office he was surprised to see Neal reading one of the mortgage fraud cases.

"Neal, it's 11 we gotta go."

"Okay."

"You ready?" Asked Peter concerned for his friend.

"As I'll ever be."

"It'll be fine."

The traffic gods were with the men as Peter drove to JFK International. Neal was quiet as he had been all day.

"So is there anything I need to know before we get your mom?"

"Not that I can think of."

"So she knows of everything? I don't have to hide anything from her?"

"Nope."

They arrived at the airport early and Neal glanced at the arrivals board.

"Her flight is on time."

"Okay so now we wait." Said Peter. "I talked to Hughes about your anklet."

"And?"

"He said he would speak to the Marshalls see if they could work something out. Possibly extending it as long as you're with your father or Claude."

"Thank you Peter."

"But Neal one screw up and Hughes said he'd slap the cuffs on you himself."

"I understand."

"Good."

"She's here." Said Neal spotting Donna walking towards them.

"Well Cowboy up, Sundance and go say Hi."

Neal looked at him with a small smile. "Thanks Butch. Mom!"

"Oh, my boy. How are you?"

"I'm good. Mom this is Peter Burke. Peter this is my mother Donna D'Augustino."

"It's nice to finally meet you Peter. You know when you were chasing him you should have given me a call I would have helped you."

"You knew where he was that whole time?"

"I was usually a week behind on his whereabouts but I had an idea."

"Mom, why don't we go get your bags?" Said Neal stopping whatever conversation Peter and Donna could have.

"What bags? I have everything already."

"That's all you brought?" Asked Neal.

"What else would I need? You know I travel light."

"Okay, well I have the rest of the day off so we can go back to my place, or if you have anything else to do?" Said Neal.

"Can you go to the gallery? You know with yourâ€|?"

"With the anklet? Yeah I can go as long as I'm with Peter or El."

"We're working on getting it extended for the gallery, but it's going to take some work." Said Peter. "And good behavior on your son's part."

"Do I have to ground you Neal? Like I did when you were in 8th grade."

"Mom, not now."

"Oh yes, now what happened?" Asked Peter already enjoying his discomfort.

"I told you this already."

"No you didn't."

"Yeah, I did when you asked me if God owed me any favors, when we were trying to catch Hagan."

"Yeah and you said not since Angela Sorenson."

"Angela was the first girl that Neal got to 2nd base with." Said Donna.

"And then I got caught with my hand up her shirt." Said Neal.

"By who?" Asked Peter with a big grin on his face.

"My mother."

"I grounded him."

"Angela dumped me and I didn't date again until I was 16."

"When he was caught again with Juliet."

"Ah, Romeo and Juliet." Said Peter as he couldn't wait to share this information with Elizabeth later.

"No her name really was Juliet, Juliet Madison. And I got caught when I was pulling my jeans up."

"Didn't you have a lock on your bedroom door?" Asked Peter jokingly as they got in the car.

"Didn't do any good she would have just picked it."

"Ah, so that's where you learned that trick." Said Peter.

"My mom taught me many things especially my appreciation for art."

"And what I couldn't Neal had my father and brothers to help us out."

"That's how I learned to shoot guns. My grandfather taught me."

A short time later Peter pulled up in front of Tribal Gallery.

"You guys ready?"

"No but I'll go anyways." Said Neal.

"If it makes you feel any better El said she was stopping by at some point to get a few things she left last night. Let's go."

The trio walked into the gallery and saw Claude sitting at the reception desk.

"I'll be right with you." Said Claude not yet looking up from his paperwork.

"No problem." Said Peter as the three of them looked around the room at the different paintings and photographs.

A couple minutes later Claude finished whatever it was that he was doing.

"So what's Donna? Donna D'Augustino?"

"Hey Claude, how are you?"

"Good, real good. Wow Berger will be back soon, he had to run to the art supply store for a minute. Neal good to see you again."

"You too."

"I see you've met my son."

"Your son? Wait you said your last name was Caffrey."

"It is." Said Neal.

"And you are?" Asked Claude noticing Peter.

"Peter Burke."

"El's husband." Said Claude.

"Hey Babe, I got everything we need for that project." Said Berger coming into the room oblivious to the other occupants of the gallery.

"Great, Berger this is Peter Burke. El's husband." Berger finally looked up and noticed the other people.

"Oh hey how are you?"

"Good it's nice to meet you."

"Neal, think on what I mentioned last night?"

"Still working it out." Said Neal.

"Hey Berger."

"Donna. Holy shit! How are you?"

"I'm good. Listen I have something I need to speak to you guys about."

"Okay what's up?" Said Berger.

"It's about Neal."

"What about Neal?" Asked Berger not noticing Claude looking back and forth between Berger and Neal when the realization dawned on him.

"Do you remember the protests in early '77 that we did?"

"I remember going and coming home. I also remember all of us smoking some heavy stuff."

"I left there pregnant with Neal."

"Are you telling me what I think you are?"

"Congratulations, it's a boy?"

"I didn't know until after Elizabeth and I left last night." Said Neal.

"Didn't I tell you, you're young enough to be my son? What are you thinking right now?" Asked Berger now turning to Claude.

"Honestly?" Berger nodded. "I'm surprised we don't have more kids running around. Welcome to the family Neal."

"Thank you."

"So how far can you get on that thing?"

"What thing?" Asked Neal.

"The little black box attached to your ankle." Said Berger with a smile.

"2 miles, unless I'm with El, Peter, or one of the other agents working."

"We're actually working on getting it extended a little further; this place is about a half mile outside of the boundary."

"So what did he catch you on?" Asked Claude with a smile.

"Bond Forgery."

"You forged bonds?" Asked Berger shocked.

"Yeah."

"Your son is a great artist, a little misguided. But great none the less."

"You need to start painting your own stuff." Said Berger.

"I've been telling him that for years; maybe he'll listen to you." Said Peter.

"What do you see when you dream?" Asked Claude.

"Nothing pretty, believe me." Said Neal hoping Peter wouldn't pick up on what he was saying.

"You still having the nightmares?" Asked Peter.

"Sometimes."

"I told you to drink the tea I sent you." Said Donna.

"I do it doesn't help sometimes." Said Neal realizing he now had to explain what he really saw when he closed his eyes. "Do you remember the plane explosion out at the small airport a couple years back?" He asked Berger and Claude.

"Yeah there were three victims, two pilots, and a passenger." Said Claude.

"The passenger was my ex-girlfriend Kate." Said Neal. "I was supposed to be on the plane. That's what I have nightmares about, I'm afraid to paint my thoughts cause I'm afraid they'll get worse."

"I'm sorry about your girl, but I'm not sorry you weren't on the plane. We can help you work through it if you want." Said Berger.

"I'll try."

"Neal I know first hand that one's nightmares sometimes become reality. I still have nightmares about Vietnam. It might not go away all together but it will lessen over time."

The newly formed family sat around and talked about different topics when Peter's cell phone rang.

"It's Hughes I have to take this, hi Reese."

"Peter, the request came through, with some conditions."

"What are they?"

"If he is heading to the gallery he must call you. If he goes anywhere other than there you need to know and he has to be with Mr. Berger or his partner."

"Okay. Thank you Reese. I really appreciate this and I know Neal does as well."

"So how's it going over there?"

"It's going good I'm learning more about him and it hasn't taken a bottle of wine or a search warrant to do it."

"Anything good?" Peter knew Reese wasn't talking about criminal acts; he wanted dirt to use on Neal in the office.

"Just that he wasn't always the ladies man he is now."

"I can't wait to hear this."

"I'll have a full report for you later."

"I look forward to it." Said Reese. Peter could hear the smile in the man's voice. Reese had two girls so in some ways Peter knew he saw Neal as that annoying wayward son that could push your buttons but it made you love him even more. Peter rejoined the group.

"So what did Reese have to say?" Asked Neal.

"The Marshalls have agreed to extend your radius under certain conditions as long as everyone agrees."

"Anything, what are they?" Asked Berger.

"If he's going to come over here I have to be informed and he can't go anywhere without one of you guys with him and I need to know, that's it." Explained Peter.

"I think we can handle that, what about you?" Asked Berger looking to Claude and Neal.

"Whatever needs to be done." Said Claude.

"That's it I just need to call you and tell you I'm coming over here?" Asked Neal.

"Yup, but don't think for one second that at the beginning of this I won't be pulling your GPS information, it's going to take a bit to trust you on this Neal."

"I understand Peter." Said Neal.

"Great now that we have that settled Boys would you like to hear more embarrassing stories from Neal's childhood complete with pictures?" Asked Donna.

"Can you give me like 10 minutes to get El down here?"

"Peter, no." Said Neal trying to save face.

"Neal, yes."

"Go ahead Peter we have plenty of time." Said Donna with a smile.

"Yeah that and it'll save me a trip up town I can give her check when she gets here." Said Claude.

Peter called El who agreed to meet them there since she was done with her meetings for the day. Like Peter she couldn't wait to learn more about her friend who she admittedly saw more as a little brother than friend.

"Hi Guys long time no see." Said El as she walked in, she had seen Peter and Neal that morning and Berger and Claude the night before, she then thought had it really been the night before?

"Elizabeth, this is my mother Donna. Mom this is Peter's wife Elizabeth." Said Neal introducing two of the most important women in his life. There were three that he sought approval from in his everyday life his mom, El, and June. Diana ranked as well just not as high on the list as those three for him.

"It's nice to meet you." Said Donna.

"You too." Said El happy to see Neal smiling. "So Peter mentioned you brought pictures?"

"Oh did I and I shipped more here. They should be here tomorrow." Said Donna as she and El walked away from Peter and Neal.

"I'm going to regret bringing them together aren't I?"

"You bet." Said Peter.

"That is not Neal." Said El looking at a picture of Neal at the age of 2 covered head to toe with paint of all different colors.

"I could have killed this little boy of 2. I went into the kitchen to get lunch and I came back out and here he is covered in my oil paints. I had started a painting while he was down for nap and I didn't know he knew how to get out of his crib."

"A prison escapee at 2. This is me shocked." Said Peter.

"Yeah but she didn't put me in an orange jumpsuit." Said Neal.

"No but I planted your little butt in the tub, scrubbed you down and then put you on the stairs for 15 minutes where you proceeded to scream and cry."

"Those stairs were evil." Said Neal.

"You just didn't like the first two steps because that was your time out spot. You used to get into everything. I remember one time I came in and found you in the kitchen and you had pulled out every single pot and pan we owned and was banging on them. He cried when I had to take a couple away so I could make dinner."

"What was he like in school?" Asked Elizabeth.

"Honor student every year. I had him in art when he was in high school and that was hard because some of his stuff was amazing and I tried to give all the kids the same amount of attention. But I always made sure he knew how great it was when we got home. I still have all of his paintings at home from that time."

"You were an honor student? Why the hell did you drop out?" Asked Peter.

"Things happened and I needed to go out and get work." Said Neal.

"Its okay Honey you can tell them." Said Donna giving her support to him.

"I had a girlfriend in high school and we were really in love or as much love as you can be at 17, anyway Jr. year just after Christmas she told me she was pregnant, so against Mom's wishes I dropped out and went to find work. What my girlfriend didn't tell me was that she was not only with me at that time but also the whole football team as well. Turns out the baby wasn't mine and I dropped out for nothing but by the time I figured all that out it was too late to go back. And I had started to work on those bonds that you got me on."

"Have you thought about going and getting your GED or something?" Asked Claude.

"I did, while I was in jail and I did a little bit of college while I was in as well."

"How much?" Asked Berger.

"I finished right before my deal came through with a Bachelor's."

"In what?" Asked Claude.

"Well the obvious would have been art history or something like that, but my major was psychology."

"Really?" Asked Peter.

"Well I tried art history but then I realized that I knew more than the professor who was teaching the subject I switched majors and I've

always been interested in how the mind works so psychology was the next logical choice."

"Well I'm very proud of you, you made your time work for you instead of just watching the clock." Said Berger.

"Thank you." Said Neal.

The newly formed family sat around and shared some more stories and ate dinner. Berger was happy he now had an extension of himself out in the world and even though he didn't raise Neal he knew he couldn't have done a better job. He and Claude were proud papas when they settled in bed for the night.

However for Neal talking things over with his parents and Peter and Elizabeth finally opened that block and after waking up to one of the more horrific nightmares he had, he started working on a canvas by the time he finished it was 5 in the morning and he was exhausted, his last thought for the night was 'thank goodness its Sunday'. It was 1 in the afternoon before anyone heard from him, finally it was June who ventured upstairs to check on him. She knocked on the door and was greeted by Neal who looked like he had just rolled off the couch since he had given Donna his bed she had already been up for a few hours when Neal woke up.

"Hey June." He said sleepily.

"Hi Sweetheart. Did I wake you up?"

"No I worked on something late and I got up a couple minutes ago." He said pulling a chair out for her.

"One of your own or something for the bureau?"

"My own." Said Neal looking at the table like it held all the answers.

"You worked on an original? Well did you finish it?"

"I did. You want to see it?"

"What do you think?"

Neal walked over to the easel and carefully picked up the canvas knowing it might still be wet. It was a picture of what he saw in his dreams of the plane explosion. When he got home he thought about what Claude had said and wanted to work through it so he painted what he saw in his dreams a flash of whites and oranges with a small amount of tarmac in the corner.

"Neal this is gorgeous, Honey is this what you see when you dream?" Asked Donna putting her book down and walking over to the table.

"Yeah well since that day. Mom did I keep you awake with everything last night?"

"No, I read for a bit and then fell asleep around midnight."

"So are you going to let your father hang this in the gallery?" Asked

Donna.

"I haven't decided it might have just been a therapy piece, I'll show it to them but I'm not sure I want it to hang in a stranger's house." Donna thought about it saw his point it was an incredibly personal piece.

"How about it hanging in mine?"

"Mom, I was thinking I would just recycle it."

"Neal you know you can't do that. This is beautiful it deserves to be out in the world. If you don't want to sell it that's fine but don't paint over it, please?" Said June.

"I'll think about it." He did for a while and he knew what he had to do. So he sat Donna down and explained it to her. "Okay so I thought about what you and June said and you have so many of my previous paintings and Berger and Claude don't have any I was thinking I would offer it to them to hang somewhereâ€"not in the gallery but somewhere."

"I think they would love that. Do you want to bring it over to them today?"

"Um, yeah let me just get ready and call Peter. Then we can head over."

"Okay Honey. Wait Neal?"

"Yeah."

"Thank you."

"What for?"

"For accepting this, not being so pissed that you push me away. I'm proud of you for trying to build a relationship with Berger and I know he and Claude are so happy to be able to build one with you I just hope that it lasts after I leave."

"It will Mom, and I was upset at first but what were you going to do back then it's not like you had the ability to really track him down like we do now. I'm going to go shower."

An hour later Neal was ready to head over to the gallery with the painting. He just had to call Peter first. He took a quick picture of the painting with his phone getting it ready to send to El and Peter. He titled it 'Breakthrough'. After the picture text was sent he was just starting to dial Peter's number when his phone rang.

"Hello?" Said Neal.

"When did you paint that?"

"After we got home. I was thinking of giving it to Berger and Claude. For them not to sell."

"I think they would like that very much, it's an amazing painting Neal I'm so proud of you for working through the

nightmares."

"Thanks Peter, so listen I was planning on heading over there and per our agreement I wanted to clear it with you." Said Neal with a smile.

"Go, I'll talk to you later. Oh wait El wants to talk to you."

"Neal, that painting is amazing. Keep up with the originals I expect one for our place soon."

"I'll work on something, and thank you now I have to go I can't talk on the phone and carry a large canvas at the same time."

"Okay, bye Honey."

After Elizabeth hung up with Neal she looked over at Peter who was on his laptop inputting the information so Neal's anklet wouldn't set off any alerts. He didn't want to look at the GPS information for Neal's exact location wanting to trust the younger man, but knew he had to just in case someone questioned him about Neal's whereabouts. Neal and Donna arrived at the gallery and saw Berger inside putting paintings up filling in the spaces left by the ones that were bought the other night. Berger turned when he heard the bell over the door chime.

"Hey Kid, Donna what brings you by?"

"Hey, so when I got home last night I thought about what Claude said about how sometimes you just have to work through your nightmares. Well last night when I couldn't sleep I think I worked through mine a little bit, and I came up with this." Neal turned the painting to show Berger.

"Nealâ€|wow. This is what you saw last night?"

"This is what I see every night. This is the tarmac, the flames, and then the sky. I'm calling it 'Breakthrough'. I want you and Claude to have it."

"Neal this is amazing."

"I want you guys to have it for your personal collection I don't want to sell it."

"No agree. Something this personal can't be put out in the chaos of the world. Claude's upstairs if you want to lock the door Donna we can go upstairs and find a place."

"You can just close up like that?" Asked Donna turning the lock.

"Well technically we're not open today so yeah I can." Said Berger with a smile.

"Claudio! Put some clothes on we got company!"

"I'm not even going to dignify that with a response. Hey Guys." He said kissing Donna on the cheek and shaking Neal's hand. "Whatcha got

there?"

"I did what you said and when I had a nightmare last night I worked through it and painted what I saw this is it. I want you guys to have it for your personal collection."

"Neal this is amazing. I mean I'm not happy this was born out of a nightmare but the result is gorgeous." Said Claude.

"Thanks."

That was how their new lives as a family continued on. The first breakthrough wasn't the last nor was it his best. It got to the point with permission from the FBI that Neal started to sell his paintings in the gallery alongside his parents, aunts, and uncles. When the rest of the Tribe heard the news of Neal's existence they welcomed him with open arms and bets were paid off amongst each other. Apparently there had been long time bets amongst the Tribe that many of the men sired children in their crazier days, but none of the payoffs were as large as they were for Berger and Claude.

The new family settled into a routine of dinners and simple get togethers, and when the time came Neal gladly introduced his girlfriend Sarah to them. Neal felt good about now having someone other than Peter to confide in and Berger and Claude either together or separately were good sounding boards. When it came time for Neal's release hearing Berger, Claude, and Donna were all there to support their son. Berger and Claude then threw him a party at the gallery to celebrate the anklet coming off when he was finally released.

Neal continued to work with the FBI, now not out of punishment but out of wanting to. The WCU was a family and their family wasn't complete without the pain in the neck little brother, who continued to have breakthroughs every day.

End
file.